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DE RUEHMR #0125 1191421

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FM AMEMBASSY MASERU

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4124

INFO RUCNSAD/SADC COLLECTIVE

RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 4551

UNCLAS MASERU 000125

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S, DS/IP/AF, DS/IP/ITA, AND DS/DSS/CC  
PRETORIA FOR DATT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: ASEC PGOV LT

SUBJECT: POLITICIAN'S SHOOTING UNRELATED TO ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

REF: A. 07 MASERU 75    B. MASERU 109

¶1. A member of parliament (MP) representing the National Independent Party (NIP), Dominic Motikoe, was shot and killed by the husband of another NIP member and fellow MP, `Mamotonosi Nkhahle. The fatal shooting took place Monday, April 27, 2009, in Maputsoe, about 90 kilometers from Maseru. According to the police, the two MPs travel to and from Maseru together daily to work at Parliament. Reports indicate that `Mamotonosi's husband suspected his wife was having an affair with Motikoe. Rumors further suggest that the husband had previously warned Motikoe to stop travelling with his wife. Upon encountering his wife in the car with Motikoe last night, Mr. Nkhale shot Motikoe 16 times with his pistol, then immediately surrendered himself to the police. Mrs. Nkhale was not hurt and her husband is still in police custody.

¶2. Motikoe was relatively unknown in political circles prior to the February 2007 elections. He came into the spotlight in the media when he formed a controversial alliance with the governing Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) party against the wishes of his party leader (ref A). This alliance came under scrutiny by the opposition and (together with the opposition's own alliance) has been the focus of the SADC-sponsored mediation between the LCD and the opposition, which has attempted to resolve disputes over the allocation of parliamentary seats that resulted from the two alliances.

¶3. Comment: The shooting temporarily ignited concern in Maseru, as rumors suggested that it was politically motivated and perhaps connected to the failed assassination attempt last week. That panic was quickly quelled when information revealed that the shooting was a domestic affair. This shooting comes less than one week after attacks on the Prime Minister's residence and the military barracks (ref B), and about two weeks after a member of the Lesotho Defense Force shot his wife and sister-in-law outside a popular local cafe in an apparent domestic dispute. Despite this violence which has marred the Kingdom's otherwise peaceful existence, the political climate is currently stable, though it will remain tense until further information concerning the identity of the Prime Minister's attempted assassins is uncovered.

POWER